

Subject: Trinity UCC in Athens Celebrates 142 Years and other SEC News!

From: Southeast Conference UCC (clwaldron@secucc.org)

To: michaelstroud@bellsouth.net;

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FEATURE FOCUS



Trinity Church in Athens, Alabama Celebrates 142 years of serving the community!

On September 1st Trinity UCC in Athens, Alabama celebrated their 142nd Anniversary.

Their accomplishments, particularly their racial and educational leadership, were celebrated in the Huntsville Times this past week. The article highlights Celestine Higgins Bridgeforth, now 93, who was educated at Trinity school beginning in Kindergarten in the 1920s when the school had black and white faculty members. She later taught at

the school, alongside the last of the missionaries from the American Missionary Society. She learned how to play piano at the school through the music classes there, a unique offering at the time. This skill served her well as she is now the church pianist at Trinity. [You can find the story by clicking here.](#)

The church and the school were founded by Mary Francis Wells, a white woman who came from the North to serve as a nurse for Union soldiers during the Civil War. When the war was over she stayed in Athens to help provide education for the newly freed slave children. Other teachers at that time were Northern white women sponsored by the American Missionary Society. In the beginning, the school had nearly as many adult students as children, because there was so much desire to learn in the wake of slavery. The school stood in the face of racist resistance from the KKK and survived as an institution after twice being set on fire.



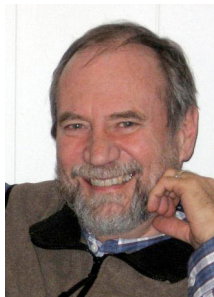
Celebrating the work of the church in the community over the last 142 years goes beyond the inception of the Trinity School. In 1939, Rev. Lloyd E. Galloway, a summer pastor from Talladega, organized the first Boy Scout Troop in Athens. In recent years the church has served the community through its "Food Barrel" program - donating non-perishable food items to the local food bank - participated in yearly school supply drives, and adopted a classroom at Tanner High School. Deacon Charles Harris founded the Doxa Health Committee which sponsors health fairs in the community alongside various health activities in North Alabama such as cancer walks and 5K runs.

The current pastor, Rev. Gary Myers, was the first Trinity pastor to serve as Moderator of the Southeast Conference. He currently serves on the UCC National Nominating Committee and has served on several boards and committees at the Association, Conference and National levels. Rev. Myers has been pushing towards revitalization of the congregation, and the church has plans for a new educational development program for area youth as well as for building a new fellowship hall. Rev. Myers is known for his Bible study entitled "The Mind of Christ" and will be the keynote speaker for the upcoming ALA-TN Association annual meeting on September 13th.

Congratulations, Trinity UCC - we celebrate your many accomplishments and rich history with you!

Photo credit and story in Huntsville Times: Kay Campbell

ICM Reflections



I've chosen a new title for what I intend to be regular communications to readers of the Southeast Conference Connection: ICM reflections. ICM seems fitting in this new world of UCC acronyms. Within the National UCC we have entities known as: WCM, LCM, JWM, CHHSM, IB, CAIM, COREM, UCAN, PB, UCF, OGHS, and CPR - the latter also being located in Atlanta, near our SEC Office and in the parsonage of one of our SECUCC congregations. And many of these different settings of the UCC have their respective CEO, CFO, and most importantly that person who doesn't fit into an

CELEBRATION



Tom Warren, former pastor of Pleasant Hill Community UCC in Pleasant Hill, TN has been called to serve as pastor of Peace UCC in Greensboro, NC. Tom served Pleasant Hill Community for 11 years. He led the congregation through the Open & Affirming, Whole Earth Church and Global Mission Church process.

acronym: the Executive Assistant or Administrative Assistant or other such titles ... the person who keeps each respective setting humming and who knows all of the details (and skeletons) that are a part of that organization.

So I have enjoyed getting to know and work with our Executive Assistant: Gerri Ryans-Hudson! And with her help I'm slowly getting to know all of you and the various pieces of the puzzle which make up SECUCC. And I am the **ICM** - important to stress because it means that I am the **Interim** Conference Minister; I'm here to bridge the gap until SEC decides its next steps into an uncertain future, but as your interim I won't be with you for the long haul. This means for me that I have to remain focused on how I can best be helpful to you; or in other words, I need to practice triage with my time.

I've been immersed in this interim task for about a month now, and already its clear to me that this conference has a rich history and has been challenged over the years by the complexities inherent with the diversity of the different strands of heritages that came together to form the Southeast Conference. It has also been challenged all along to survive financially. These challenges continue, but more significant to me are the opportunities that lie ahead. I sense that those who have been closely involved in the life of the conference realize that there are many new things emerging here. But you may not realize how just how numerous and significant those things are - both for the future of this conference and region but indeed for all of the United Church of Christ and for mainline Christianity.

Among the new things I have discovered so far in SEC are the following: your new PATHWAYS theological education program, your new website, your capital campaign to transform churches and lives, your Commission on Ministry (COM) working to model its future after the National UCC division that works with conferences on matters dealing with ministers and congregations (Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization ... also known as MESA), your new Church Starts, and your newly affiliating congregations from other backgrounds. There is an exciting spirit in the air here - God is not only still speaking among you but leading you to new ways of being the Church in this new century.

So far I've been able to experience several points of New Church with attendance at worship of our Praxis UCC in Atlanta and UCC Pensacola. I have also worshiped with two of the historical congregations in

During his time he also oversaw green initiatives such as the \$2.3 million building expansion project with geo-thermal heating system. During Tom's time at Pleasant Hill the congregation received Council of Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM) 2006 Congregational Stewardship Award.

Tom will be missed by the congregation, the Alabama-Tennessee Association as well as the conference staff.

Congratulations to the following Members in Discernment, who were voted by the Commission on Ministry as "ordainable pending a call" following their Ecclesiastical Council on July 20th: **Lacey Brown** and **Drew Terry**, members of Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta, GA, **Yelanda Collins**, member of Community Congregational UCC in Montgomery, AL and **Charmaine Johnson**, member of Victory UCC.

We congratulate them for completion of the MID process and wish them well on their search.

Generosity Corner

Transform Your Life-Transform the World



GOD IS THE FIRST AND
MOST GENEROUS GIVER

God made the first move of generosity. And the second. And the third.

As we move forward in the act of generous giving, we must move forward in the transformation of our hearts, souls, and minds..... a transformation by the truth that God made the first generous move.

- Excerpts from Gordon MacDonald's book:

Generosity: Moving Toward Life That Is Truly Life

**New Stewardship Material
Design for 2013!**

the Atlanta area: Central Congregational UCC and First Congregational UCC. Praxis and Pensacola are experimenting with new forms with substance, and both were wonderful experiences for me. And Central and First are living out deep traditions with new dimensions - again wonderful worship experiences.

I chose to attend First Congregational in particular last Sunday because I wanted to be in touch with the rich history of civil rights in that congregation and in this region -- particularly with the history of Dr. Martin Luther King and the many who were a part of the movement he led, including leaders and members of many of our SEC congregations. Rev. Dwight Andrew's sermon was titled: When Rules Get in the Way - a message intimately linked to these words written by Dr. King while he was in prison: "I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

I will continue to ponder these words as I work among you for they are related to the basic challenge the Church faces today: how do we honor the traditions we have inherited while at the same time allowing God to work among us to bring in that which is new and exciting and life-giving? May God be with us as face this challenge together!

-- **Peace & Blessings, Randy**

P.S. If you wonder about all of the acronyms I used in the beginning of this message, I invite you to explore for yourself in the National UCC website: ucc.org and in our SEC website: secucc.org. In doing so you will experience something like I have been experiencing in this first month among you - it's like putting a puzzle together!

JAZZ FOR THE JOURNEY

A National Symposium on Jazz as Liturgy

The National Setting of the UCC is pleased to announce a national symposium for the United Church of Christ and its ecumenical partners. Initiated by General Minister and President, Geoffrey Black, Jazz for the Journey will explore the spirituality and artistry of jazz as an innovative



Coordinated stewardship materials for your congregation's annual stewardship effort. United Church of Christ Stewardship Campaign Materials include: Poster, four bulletin inserts (including giving chart), worship folder, letterhead and envelope, note card, commitment cards, Faith-Promise cards, time and talent pledge cards.

For more information, go here: <http://www.ucc.org/stewardship/> and call Debbie Spearman for advice or assistance. dspearman@secucc.org.



Restore the Voting Rights Act

From the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network:

Voting is at the heart of the democratic process. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) was one of the important policy outcomes of the March on Washington, which took place 50 years ago today. It is widely considered a landmark piece of civil rights legislation that has been pivotal in helping to bring about significant progress in efforts toward racial equality and justice by addressing racial discrimination in the voting process. In late June, the Supreme Court issued a decision in the case of Shelby County v. Holder that suspended the use of the VRA's most effective protections against racial discrimination, thus rendering other sections of the VRA that remain intact to be insufficient alone in ensuring such protections. The decision came despite the fact that there is substantial evidence of continuing racial discrimination in jurisdictions around the country, in the form of purging voter rolls, moving polling places, gerrymandering district lines and voter intimidation on Election Day.

The UCC General Synod has long supported voting rights and advocated for the removal of obstacles to

foundation for worship renewal. Geared for pastors, church musicians, worship planners and jazz lovers, Jazz for the Journey, will provide a creative context for developing ideas, resources and liturgical tools to inspire, inform and empower congregations exploring imaginative possibilities for worship revitalization. It will also feature **Rev. Dwight Andrews** from First Congregational Church in Atlanta, along with a list of other dynamic speakers and musicians.



Jazz for the Journey will include spirit-filled worship led by the Oikos Ensemble, keynote presentations, experiential workshops, dynamite musicians, cool jam sessions and a Friday night all-star Sacred

Side of Jazz concert hosted by Leon Bibb, WEWS-TV newscaster and jazz aficionado. There will also be ample opportunity to build networks and share creative ideas with colleagues from around the country.

Additional information, a detailed schedule and registration can be found at www.ucc.org/jazzjourney

Disaster Preparedness Webinar



CWS "Health and Safety in Disaster Recovery" Webinar - September 10

Health and Safety are vital components of disaster relief and recovery, not only for the survivors, but also for the volunteers who are often in risky environments. Claire Galiano, a health and safety trainer with the New Jersey Work Environment Council (NJWEC), will lead a Church World Service (CWS) Webinar on "Health and Safety in Disaster Recovery" September 10, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Eastern time.

Galiano has played an important role in the recovery process following Superstorm Sandy. She will be

participation in the electoral process within the broader context of the civil rights struggle. Most recently, General Synod 29 decisively adopted a statement calling on the church to publicly support voter's rights through public statements, advocacy and actions in response to the Supreme Court's decision to strike down part of the Voting Rights Act. This action was grounded in the understanding that justice cannot be achieved unless the rules for governing the democratic process are fair to all. In light of the Shelby decision, members of the House and Senate have begun holding hearings to assess a way forward toward restoring the VRA. Contact your members of Congress and urge them to work toward restoring needed protections against voter discrimination by updating and strengthening the Voting Rights Act.

[Click here to read more and to take action to restore the Voting Rights Act!](#)

NEW Conference Website!

New Website and Connection Program

What's New?

The Southeast Conference Website has a new design, easy access to news and events, and resizes to fit your screen, whether you are using a phone, iPad, tablet, or laptop. We'd like to make this even more interactive for churches in the Conference!

Congregations can now appoint members to be "Social Networking Partners" with the ability to post news, stories, and event information directly to the website to promote what your community is doing and connect with other SEC congregations!

How does your church get connected?

Contact Chris Lyman Waldron at clwaldron@secucc.org or you can call the Conference Office. You'll be able to sign up for training on how to use these exciting new tools.



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joined by Bill Hubler and Jonathan Morawetz, who also have worked with the United Church of Christ, CWS, and various recovery organizations during numerous training events. These events have included "Recovery Tools and Training" workshops in New Jersey following Superstorm Sandy, and in New York City following the September 11 terrorist attacks.

[Click here to register](#)



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